

Ottumwa
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108 Great Places coaches in town today

Three pilot locations sought

By **MATT MILNER**
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OTTUMWA — Ottumwa's shot at "Great Place" designation begins today.

Area residents will have their first chance today to hear from coaches involved with the Iowa Great Places initiative. The meeting takes place at 12:30 p.m. at the library.

The initiative seeks three pilot locations for a program that could expand statewide. Gov. Tom Vilsack proposed the initiative as a way of creating attrac-

tions for business, recreation and new residents.

The initiative's Web site says the program is "designed to make good places great by bringing together the resources of state government to build capacity in communities, regions, neighborhoods or districts that cultivate the unique and authentic qualities that make places special."

In other words, the program has a lot of wiggle room in deciding just what to do. That range of options is fully mirrored in the range of applications. Most are from cities, but city-county partnerships, multi-county regions, neighborhoods and even individual businesses also applied.

Ottumwa is one of several places in southeast Iowa that hopes to become a pilot location. The initial meeting with the coaches is one of the first steps.

Tim Schwartz, whose signature is on Ottumwa's letter to the Great Places initiative said he was encouraged by the number of locations in this area that applied. The numbers illustrate the variety of attractions southeast Iowa has to offer, he said.

Ottumwa's plans focus on expansion of the city's bike trails and on downtown housing. Schwartz said those are starting points; other aspects will play roles as well.

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